



DEFENSE LOGISTICS AGENCY
HEADQUARTERS
8725 JOHN J. KINGMAN ROAD, SUITE 2533
FORT BELVOIR, VIRGINIA 22060-6221

IN REPLY
REFER TO DO

JAN 30 2004

MEMORANDUM FOR DEFENSE LOGISTICS AGENCY EMPLOYEES

SUBJECT: Black History Month February 2004

The theme for Black History Month 2004 is "*Brown vs. the Board of Education* (50th Anniversary)." This theme commemorates the landmark 1954 Supreme Court decision to desegregate public schools. This decision declared that racial segregation in public schools violated the 14th Amendment of the United States Constitution.

Linda Brown, a Black 8-year old girl, in Topeka, Kansas, walked past an "all White school" she could not attend because of the color of her skin and walked across railroad tracks to catch a bus to take her to an "all Black school" each day. The racially segregated school system under the separate but equal doctrine was legal. This doctrine stated that separate public facilities of equal quality did not violate the 14th Amendment.

Linda's father sued the Topeka Board of Education in Federal District Court on the basis that separate school facilities for Blacks were inherently unequal. Mr. Brown enlisted the help of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) to appeal the case to the Supreme Court. The late Justice Thurgood Marshall, who was the NAACP's legal director, argued that although school facilities may be physically equal, intangible factors were not taken into account and segregation itself deprived minority children equal education opportunities. On May 17, 1954, the Supreme Court ruled unanimously to end racial segregation in public schools.

During Black History Month, let us remember this landmark decision that righted a wrong in our social system. Although education is often a hot political issue today, thanks to *Brown vs. the Board of Education*, the issue is focused on the tangible factor of quality rather than equality. Chief Justice Earl Warren delivered the Supreme Court's decision and claimed that "in the eyes of the law, justice is color blind."

Learn more about our Country's rich historical diversity. Please help celebrate Black History Month by participating in your communities' activities.

MARY L. SAUNDERS
Major General, USAF
Vice Director

